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14. ABSTRACT The Navy and Marine Corps team of the ESG is the most versatile, capable, and enabling force in Expeditionary Warfare. The ESG embodies nearly all the capabilities required to complete any mission in the littorals and is the force of choice for certain missions within the ROMO. In the execution of these missions where a Joint Task Force is formed, ESGs typically represent the preponderance of maritime forces and provide extensive experience and capabilities for such operations. Even though the ESG may be the best choice to act as JFMCC in the littoral, there is little training conducted prior to deployment to prepare them for JFMCC tasking. This paper examines the capabilities of ESGs and analyzes whether they should be trained as a JFMCC for certain operations within ROMO including Foreign Humanitarian Assistance, Noncombatant Evacuation, Disaster Relief, and Peacekeeping Operations. By analyzing the operational level functions of the JFMCC, comparing/contrasting capabilities of the CSG versus the ESG, and analyzing past joint operations where ESGs and CSGs played vital roles in the joint task force command and control, this paper will provide a recommendation to whether or not ESGs should be trained to operate as JFMCCs.					
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**Expeditionary Strike Groups Operating
as Joint Force Maritime Component Commanders**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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ABSTRACT

The Navy and Marine Corps team of the Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) is the most versatile, capable, and enabling force in Expeditionary Warfare. The ESG embodies nearly all the capabilities required to complete any mission in the littorals and is the force of choice for certain missions within the Range of Military Operations (ROMO). In the execution of these missions where a Joint Task Force (JTF) is formed, ESGs typically represent the preponderance of maritime forces and provide extensive experience and capabilities for such operations. Even though the ESG may be the best choice to act as the Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC) in the littoral, there is little training conducted prior to deployment to prepare them for JFMCC tasking.

This paper examines the capabilities of ESGs and analyzes whether they should be trained as a JFMCC for certain operations within ROMO including Foreign Humanitarian Assistance, Disaster Relief, Noncombatant Evacuation, and Peacekeeping Operations. By analyzing the operational level functions of the JFMCC, comparing/contrasting capabilities of the Carrier Strike Group (CSG) versus the ESG, and analyzing past joint operations where ESGs and CSGs played vital roles in the JTF command and control, this paper will provide a recommendation as to whether or not ESGs should be trained to operate as JFMCCs.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, the military has seen a tremendous change in its focus from major combat operations with the former Soviet Union to many military operations other than war. Although the military prepares, plans, and executes major combat operations like Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), it had, especially in the 1990s, and continues to spend considerable efforts focused in other areas within the spectrum of the Range of Military Operations (ROMO) such as Peacekeeping Operations (PO), Foreign Humanitarian Assistance (FHA), and Disaster Relief (DR) operations. In 1992, in the concept paper ". . . From the Sea," the Navy changed its vision for the 21st century from the "blue water" Navy of the past to the "brown water," or littoral, Navy of the future:

Our ability to command the seas in areas where we anticipate future operations allows us to resize our naval forces and to concentrate more on capabilities required in the complex operating environment of the 'littoral' or coastlines of the earth. . . . The new direction of the Navy and Marine Corps team, both active and reserve, is to provide the nation: Naval Expeditionary Forces - shaped for joint operations operating forward from the sea - tailored for national needs.¹

Since then, Expeditionary Forces within the Navy have re-emerged and have evolved to take a more dominant role as exemplified in the concept Sea Strike in the current Navy vision

Sea Power 21:

Sea Strike. . . . includes naval fires, strategic deterrence, and amphibious warfare (the latter more appropriately characterized today as Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare). When naval fires are required, the Joint Task Force Commander has a variety of naval weapons to choose from, including accurate standoff munitions delivered from aircraft, gun-fired precision-guided munitions, and sophisticated cruise missiles launched from surface warships and submarines. . . . Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare includes the ability to mass overwhelming naval, joint, and allied military power, and deliver it ashore to influence, deter, contain, or defeat an aggressor. Naval expeditionary forces provide the Joint Task Force Commander with the ability to conduct military operations in an area of control, extending from the open ocean to the shore, and to those inland areas that can be attacked, supported, and defended directly from the sea.²

As the military is refocusing its efforts on more efficient joint operations, the Navy has also been developing its service support role to the Joint Force Commander (JFC) for maritime security, assurance, and operations as the Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC). During major operations, the Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) is the JFC, and the Navy Numbered Fleet, also acting as the Navy Component Commander (NCC), assumes the role as the JFMCC. However, in other operations throughout the ROMO where the GCC has designated a Joint Task Force (JTF) and assigned a subordinate as the JTF Commander (CJTF), the Navy may assign another commander proportional to the CJTF as the JFMCC. Typically, as during Operation Unified Assistance or during the Katrina relief efforts, Carrier Strike Group staffs (CSG) have been tasked as the JFMCC.

Even though the ESG may be the best choice to assume the duties as JFMCC in the littoral, there is little training and no certification for them. Are ESGs capable of performing the duties of a JFMCC? Should ESGs be trained and certified as a JFMCC? This paper is intended to present a discussion of why ESGs are capable of performing the responsibilities of and should be trained to assume the role of as the JFMCC for missions within the ROMO less than major combat operations such as FHA, DR, PO, and Noncombatant Evacuation Operations (NEO). Training an ESG as a JFMCC provides the NCC and thus the GCC more options and flexibility when designating a JFMCC during certain JTF operations within the ROMO.

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

Joint Force Maritime Component Commander

The discussion on what is a Joint Force Maritime Component Commander is not new but has recently taken a new emphasis within the Navy. According to the recently released Joint Publication 3-32,

The joint maritime component commander (JFMCC) is the joint force commander's (JFC's) maritime warfighter. . . . JFMCC responsibilities include . . . planning, coordination, allocation, tasking, and synchronization of joint maritime operations based on the JFC's concept of operations. . . . The JFMCC typically exercises operational control over assigned and attached forces. . . . The JFMCC executes or contributes to the operational functions supporting JFC goals.³

But what makes a JFMCC a JFMCC? A JFMCC is defined by its role and by its command and control capability. The role of the JFMCC is to integrate "maritime actions across all components to support the JFC's objectives and intent."⁴ It must be able to coordinate with commanders of other JTF components as well as other supporting agencies or militaries to ensure effective and efficient conduct of operations, plan and conduct operations in accordance with CJTF guidance and plans and monitor the operational situation and, as required, pass information to the CJTF.⁵

A fundamental capability of any JFMCC is the ability to conduct and coordinate operational vice tactical level planning. According to the Navy's recently updated TACMEMO 3-32-06, "The JFMCC plans and executes JFC missions, translating operational objectives and tasking into tactical action by subordinates."⁶ A JFMCC conducts operational-level planning focused on an effects-based approach to operations in order to "preserve the operational-level as the integrating joint force focal point."⁷ This includes the operational functions of command and control, operational maneuver and force positioning, waterspace management, operational intelligence activities, joint force fires/targeting, logistics, sustainment and protection.⁸ They will develop a collaborative plan with the JFC, direct and monitor subordinates, plan and execute actions, maintain situational awareness of maritime activities, and conduct operational level assessment focused on task accomplishment.⁹

The JFMCC is given the authority necessary to accomplish missions and tasks assigned by the establishing commander.¹⁰ The JFMCC may be delegated command authority in the form

of Operational Control (OPCON) for the purpose of executing the mission which is the authority to perform those functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission.¹¹ Yet a JFMCC will also be delegated Tactical Control (TACON), including other service assets as well (e.g., USAF Air Mobility Assets), which is limited to the detailed and, usually, local direction and control of movements or maneuvers necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned.¹² For example, the JFMCC normally exercises TACON of movements, employment, or other military capabilities of maritime forces made available to the joint force maritime component for tasking.¹³ However, if available, a JFMCC may delegate TACON of units to subordinate commands in order to continue to focus on the operational objectives.

During many operations, the Numbered Fleet Commanders will act as the NCC through their Maritime Headquarter (MHQ) and operate as the JFMCC utilizing their Maritime Operations Center (MOC). The MOC is designed to provide the JFC with a maritime operational-level planning team that enhances joint integration and interoperability.¹⁴ However, not all operations within the ROMO where JTFs are formed necessitate fleet level command as the JFMCC but rather require operational-level planning that could better be conducted by a subordinate staff. In certain cases, CSG or ESG staffs may be appropriate to operate as the JFMCC.

Carrier Strike Group and Expeditionary Strike Group Roles/Missions

The primary missions of the Carrier Strike Group (CSG) are focused on sea control and power projection ashore and include protection of economic and/or military shipping, protection of a Marine amphibious force while en route to and upon arrival in an amphibious objective area,

and establishing a naval presence in support of national interests. Its primary asset, the Carrier Air Wing, is designed as a strike asset, predominantly for conventional warfare and major conflict operations. Although individual units of the CSG are trained in Maritime Security Operations and other operations in the littoral, the majority of its efforts is in "blue water" Navy operations and power projection.¹⁵ The commanders can also be trained to "operate as Joint Force Commanders or as commanders of joint/combined task forces exercising all joint tactical control throughout designated Areas of Responsibility."¹⁶

An ESG is a task force that integrates Navy warships and Marines to assemble a specific package of assets to combat a specific threat, leverage the synergistic effects of a unit that trained together for a broad set of missions, and is an organization that could either be a small task force or part of a larger task force. It centers on the flexibility and readiness of a combined expeditionary unit (the Marine Expeditionary Unit) and an amphibious readiness group (ARG). The total ESG provides operational freedom and expanded warfare capabilities, not only by land with embarked Marines, but at sea, as well. Its missions include Direct Action Amphibious Raids, Maritime Special Operations such as seizure/recovery of offshore energy facilities and Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel, PO, NEO, Foreign FHA, and security operations.¹⁷

Historical Carrier Strike Group and Expeditionary Strike Group Joint Operations

In December 2004, a powerful underwater earthquake off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia created a devastating tsunami that struck the coasts of Indonesia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, killing hundreds of thousands and destroying nearly all the infrastructure that was in its path. Combined Support Force 536, commanded by General Blackman (III MEF), was formed to react to the situation in what would be called Operation Unified Assistance. In response, the Navy ordered the *Abraham Lincoln* CSG, the *Bonhomme Richard* ESG, and other independent ships to assist in

the immediate disaster relief and humanitarian assistance operations in Sumatra. Admiral Crowder with the *LINCOLN* CSG (CSG-9) was the first on the scene and headed up the naval relief efforts for Indonesia, conducting the majority of the operations in vicinity of Banda Aceh. Admiral Ames and the *Bonhomme Richard* ESG (ESG-5) arrived a few days later and were directed to conduct operations in vicinity of Meulaboh. Later in the operation, the *Essex* ESG arrived and eventually relieved CSG-9. The success of the operation came primarily in two areas: 1) the ability to sea-base supplies and 2) helicopters for transport of humanitarian supplies.¹⁸ Due to certain political and damage induced limitations, the majority of supplies had to be based at sea. Helicopters were the only means of transport for supplies both ashore and to the where the supplies needed to go for those in need. According to the comprehensive history and analysis in historian Bruce Elleman's *Waves of Hope: The U.S. Navy's Response to the Tsunami in Northern Indonesia*, "Sea-based helicopters proved absolutely crucial in delivering humanitarian supplies and moving injured people to hospitals. Helicopters were the only way to move supplies efficiently."¹⁹

During two recent operations, ESG staffs have acted operationally as the JTF - specifically, during Operation Lifeline in Pakistan and during the initial phase of the assisted departure (NEO) in Lebanon. In October 2005, an earthquake struck northern Pakistan with its destruction and landslides killing nearly 75,000 people and leaving nearly 130,000 injured and another estimated 3.5 million people homeless.²⁰ Central Command (CENTCOM), through Commander FIFTH Fleet (C5F), directed Admiral LeFever as Expeditionary Strike Group ONE (ESG-1) to command the Disaster Assistance Center Pakistan, responsible for coordinating the Joint U.S. military response - including the use of all services. The operation was not only a joint effort, but it was also a combined and multinational effort that built relationships and

partnerships between many players including the Pakistani military, United Nations, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of State (DOS), the US Embassy in Pakistan, and NATO.²¹ Concerning the success of the operation, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Ryan Crocker stated that “We set a new world standard for how the military works with everyone else to respond to a complex humanitarian emergency.”²² On the significance of the ESG-1 efforts, Vice President Cheney concluded that “This operation would not have been possible without the effort of ESG-1.”²³

In July 2006, in response to increased hostilities between the Israelis and Hezbollah terrorists based in Lebanon, the US Ambassador to Lebanon and the DOS requested US military assistance in the departure of Americans from Lebanon. The Secretary of Defense ordered CENTCOM to support this effort. As directed by CENTCOM, C5F designated General Jensen and Combined Task Force FIVE NINE (CTF-59), formerly Expeditionary Strike Group THREE, as the CJTF to execute the evacuation Americans in Lebanon. Nearly 15,000 Americans were evacuated from Lebanon to Cyprus and Turkey via Air Bridge using Army, Marine, and Navy helicopter; Commercial Sea Bridge using contracted cruise ships; and Navy Sea Bridge using Naval amphibious shipping. Airlift was also arranged for their transportation to the US. As well, the JTF delivered much needed humanitarian supplies to Lebanon.²⁴ Throughout the operation, CTF-59 conducted interagency/joint operational-level planning with the U.S. Embassies to Lebanon, Turkey, Israel, and Cyprus, USAID, European Command, CENTCOM, Transportation Command, and all service components as well as multi-national coordination with Canada, Israel, Lebanon, Cyprus, and others.

During both operations, ESG commanders were called upon to act as the CJTF. Both were highly successful operations, due largely to the efforts of the ESG staffs. Additionally,

ESGs have been utilized as CJTFs or JFMCCs with success during exercises including ESG-1 as CJTF during exercise Trident Warrior 2004 and ESG-3 as the Combined Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (CFMCC) during exercise Bright Star 2005, "the world's largest coalition exercise involving 47 participant and observer nations,"²⁵ proving that ESGs can operate as JFMCCs.

Range Of Military Operations

ESGs are more suited than CSGs to conduct certain operations within the ROMO. PO, NEO, HA, and DR are core competency missions; and during the training cycle, MEU and the ESG conduct extensive training in these areas. ESGs do not conduct predominantly air assault missions but rather train for strikes and raids with the MEU as the primary force. The CSGs train principally on sea-based aviation and power projection missions; however, they place minor emphasis on NEOs, Peacekeeping, or HA/DR Humanitarian Assistance as reflected in the Projected Operational Environment for Carrier Strike Groups Staffs.²⁶ In this case, ESGs are more suited to conduct operations on what have been characterized as the "lower end of the ROMO spectrum" while CSGs are more appropriate for operations more towards the major combat operations end of the spectrum.

If an operation is strike aviation centered or is expected to grow to support a large number of joint and combined forces, all of which will need to send liaisons and planning cells, the CSG has a clear advantage due to size of its staff and its ability to support a large number of liaisons. If, however, the operation is limited in scope and duration and is primarily amphibious in nature, the ESG commander becomes the ESF commander and the CSG provides support.²⁷

Additionally, "Some of the former [Carrier Battle Group] missions can easily be transferred to less powerful forces, particularly in a lesser threat environment. The traditional CBG is thus released from certain missions."²⁸

CONCLUSION

It is my belief that an ESG can conduct JFMCC operations with the same or better success as a CSG during certain operations within the ROMO. During Unified Assistance, if Admiral Ames and ESG-5 had arrived in vicinity of Indonesia prior to CSG-9, I believe the staff coupled with the capabilities of C2 aboard the *Bonhomme Richard* would have been able to conduct the operational level planning and coordination necessary with the same results as were exemplified by Admiral Crowder and the CSG-9 staff. The primary successes of CSG-9 came from sea-basing and helicopters. The ESG has an advantage in sea-basing over the CSG as the amphibious ships are capable of storing more goods/provisions for transport ashore while being capable of extended, self-sufficient littoral operations. USS Abraham Lincoln deployed with additional complement of helicopters than usual. According to Admiral Zortman, Commander U.S. Naval Air Forces,

It was fortunate that *Abraham Lincoln* happened to be the carrier deployed to the Pacific when this disaster struck, because it was the test platform for the future carrier strike group (CSG) helicopter operational concept. *Abraham Lincoln* was exercising the latest in a series of “Bravo to Sea” (B2C) initiatives that, for the first time, deployed an entire HSL (helicopter anti-submarine, light) squadron. . . . As a result, a total of 17 helicopters from three squadrons . . . were assigned to the CSG — helicopters that were urgently needed by the survivors in Sumatra.²⁹

Typically, an ESG will deploy with approximately 20 transport helicopters, all designed to carry personnel or supplies. In this case, the CSG and the ESG brought about the same capability of airlift assets to the relief efforts. However, the ESG was also able to bring sea lift in the form of LCAC and LCU which were able to exponentially increase the throughput of aid to Indonesia.

From the lessons learned of Operation Unified Assistance, "For this type of mission, HA/DR, it would have made more sense to combine the CSG and the ESG into an [Expeditionary Strike Force]. Instead, the ESG was sent south to cover the area of Meulaboh, and the two groups basically operated independently of each other."³⁰ The CSG staff did not have the expeditionary operations experience or expertise in HA missions that the ESG staff possessed. The ESG staff operating as the JFMCC, supported by the MEU staff with its HA operations proficiency and combat support/engineers, may have been able to make the overall maritime operation run more smoothly and with more coordination, possibly increasing the operation's effectiveness.

Extensive training and planning has already been done to equip the Numbered Fleets' staffs to become JFMCCs. Then why should ESGs or even CSGs be trained to perform as JFMCCs if the Numbered Fleets, with the utilization of MHQs/MOCs, may be better suited to fulfill these missions? Numbered Fleets are responsible for the overall maritime awareness and U.S., Allied, and Coalition coordination for their entire area of operations. Their MHQs/MOCs are designed to function regionally, and many JTF operations are conducted in very precise locations where having the JFMCC on location may be more suitable and appropriate to the operation.

CSGs possess the staff size and have received some training, typically in the form of fleet exercises, at operational-level planning while still being able to execute at the tactical level. ESGs, however, are considered primarily to be tactical force executors and not operational level planners. In addition, CSGs typically deploy with a Destroyer Squadron which is able to tactically plan and execute, allowing the CSG to remain operationally focused. ESGs typically do operate at the tactical level, but if called up can operate at the operational level. Prior to the

genesis of the ESG, the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG) was often TACON to the Carrier Battle Group (CBG - now CSG) and did not indigenously possess all the required staff to be able to participate at the operational level including Fires/Supporting Arms Coordination, Information Operations, and Intelligence support. The ARG and MEU were tactical executors of the CBG objectives. However, with the establishment of the ESG, the staffs are being trained with a similar operational focus as the CSGs, executing similar planning/battle scenarios during the training cycle with focus not only on tactical but operational objectives. The training is the same for both West Coast previous O-7 commanded ESGs and the East Coast O-6 commanded ESGs. If the O-7 commanded ESGs do continue, they are perfectly suited for operational level missions such as JFMCC where they can separate themselves from the tactical level by tasking the Amphibious Squadron Commander as the tactical executioner. Although a Flag Officer/General Officer commanded ESG is optimal to support the staffing required for a JFMCC and the operational level planning, an O-6 commanded ESG could also, under limited duration and spectrum missions, operate successfully as a JFMCC. If the O-6 commanded ESGs prevail, they are also able to separate themselves from tactical execution by delegating certain CWC roles to subordinate commanders such as the LHA/LHD, LPD, or CG commanders (all O-6).

Recently, the Navy has transitioned the Commander Amphibious Groups (CPG) in Norfolk, San Diego, and Okinawa to Expeditionary Strike Group Command Elements (similar to the previous West Coast ESG staffs), shifting from an “administrative staff supporting operational units to an operational command focused on expeditionary operations.”³¹ This transition has created new ESGs that are responsible for “preparing ESG forces for deployment and maintaining proficiencies as a staff to provide fleet commanders with a ready fly-away command element that is extremely flexible in mission assignment.”³² They also provide

SECOND, THIRD, and SEVENTH Fleets with stand-by command elements for a task force while rotating to FIFTH Fleet as the CTF-59, "providing [NAVCENT] with a stable expeditionary staff capable of conducting sustained detailed operational planning and mission execution."³³ With this new formation of ESG Command Elements, why should the traditional ESGs also certify as JFMCCs? As seen recently in Lebanon or in other operations within the ROMO other than major operations, the ESG Command Element (CTF-59) was designated the CJTF. While acting in this capacity, they should not also be dual-hatted as the CJTF and the JFMCC. In cases similar to this, having a qualified traditional ESG staff functioning as the JFMCC would alleviate the CJTF of focusing on the maritime operational planning and allow them to concentrate their efforts on the overall operation.

If CSGs are receiving some joint operations training, typically in the form of a joint fleet exercise, why should traditional ESGs also be trained in joint operations if there is traditional an overlap of CSGs in all AORs? As during the assisted departure from Lebanon, the CSG deployed to a C5F theater of operations may not be available to assist. In this case, the *Enterprise* Strike Group was conducting operations in the Western Pacific. Other previous and conflicting operations such as OIF or OEF may prevent a CSG from participating in an operation. Also, in operations in the Mediterranean or off the Western Coast of Africa, CSGs do not predominantly operate. In these and similar cases, who should be designated the JFMCC? According to naval analyst Jijrg Kiirsener, "The ESG has remarkable strengths, because it offers the options of strategic strikes, 'long legs' and a rapid response for contingency operations without a Carrier Strike Group available. It is a highly agile, mobile, responsive and more flexible force than an ARG/MEU."³⁴ In certain cases such as HA, DR, or PO, as in Pakistan with ESG-1, the answer may be the traditional ESG who is also better suited/prepared to perform these missions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a prudent military commander . . . you plan to use a combination of your air forces, sea forces, and land forces and you want to make sure all of them are capable of doing everything you think they need to. . . .³⁵

GEN H. N. Schwarzkopf, USA
Commander in Chief
US Central Command

As evidenced by Operation Lifeline in Pakistan and the assisted departure from Lebanon, ESGs have successfully completed JTF missions before, and they will continue to be tasked with similar missions in the future. Although the ESG may no longer be commanded by a Flag Officer/General Officer, they still possess the capability and resources to operate at an operational level and will continue to be called upon to conduct operations in joint environments.

The success of the relief effort was due in part to the ability to quickly and efficaciously build a team among nations, agencies, and branches of the military (Expeditionary Strike Group 1, U.S. Joint Forces Command, Task Forces Griffin and Eagle, and individual augmentees). The experience and competency of personnel were the keys to this monumental team building. It was critical to have experienced people with the wisdom and maturity to crystallize into an effective group under pressure in a short time. "It's people who make systems work." said Admiral LeFever.³⁶

Would ESGs then not be better equipped to produce even more significant results during missions if we train the people who will execute the missions? If ESG forces are going to be the primary maritime force to conduct these operations within the ROMO, the ESG CDR vice a CSG CDR should be designated the JFMCC since he has a better operational and tactical knowledge of the employment of the forces. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) is responsible to train JFCs, and the service components are responsible for training their own functional component commanders. Currently, the Naval War College (NWC) has assumed the lead in JFMCC training and certification within the Navy. Fleet Forces Command (FFC), with NWC and Numbered Fleet collaboration, should develop a standardized curriculum for JFMCC training - both at the

MHQ/MOC level and at the CSG/ESG level. This curriculum should include schoolhouse training and fleet exercises to better prepare staffs for JFMCC operations. For ESGs, the schoolhouse training needs to focus on operational-level planning, concepts, language, and processes, taught either at the NWC, at the fleet training centers (e.g., Tactical Training Groups), or at another equivalent location. The fleet exercises need to be coordinated with JFCOM and present scenarios to allow the ESG to operate as the JFMCC in a joint environment and not as the tactical executor of a CSG or Fleet staff.

As stated in . . . *From the Sea*, "The Navy and Marine Corps will now respond to crises and can provide the initial, 'enabling' capability for joint operations in conflict - as well as continued participation in any sustained effort."³⁷ ESGs are force enablers and present NCCs and GCCs with significant capabilities. They are also able to complete "more diverse and challenging tasks."³⁸ As is now and will continue in the future, "Many of the missions associated with crisis response and contingencies, such as disaster relief and FHA operations, will not require combat."³⁹ According to Colonel Michael Kennedy,

Used correctly, [ESGs] could be the force of choice for combatant commanders who need a flexible, tailorable task force that is entirely seabased. It has a rapid response capability that rivals any other regional JTF currently in existence and can be task organized on the fly. If the contingency requires a larger scope or duration, the ESG can be the "enabler" that provides C2 and operational planning functions until the contingency JTF can be formed and flown into the theater. It clearly has the potential to provide us the ability to lead joint/combined contingency operations vice merely providing forces for airmobile Army and Air Force task force headquarters.⁴⁰

ESGs should be required to be able to operate in a joint environment prior to deployment; however, currently there is no such integrative training or emphasis for the ESG. CSGs participate in a Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX) as the capstone to the strike group's pre-deployment training cycle. This exercise forces the Strike Group Commander to "evaluate and prioritize every potential threat, balance the competing demands of all warfare commanders, and

apportion limited assets to counter threats and decisively prevail in combat.”⁴¹ JTFEX follows the Composite Training Unit Exercise (COMPTUEX) which is conducted and directed by Strike Force Training Group Atlantic/Pacific and is focused on “developing the carrier/air wing team into a cohesive unit and. . . integrating [other strike group] units into the associated deploying [Strike] Group.”⁴²

Similarly, on the West Coast, the ESG conducts a COMPTUEX followed by a final evaluation JTFEX. This exercise is rarely joint in nature as only the Navy and Marines participate. Conversely, for East Coast ESGs, pre-deployment training consists of an Expeditionary Strike Group Exercise (ESGEX) which is similar in design and standards as the COMPTUEX and is conducted by Strike Force Training Group Atlantic. For final evaluation, the ESG undergoes a Certification Exercise (CERTEX)/Special Operations Capable Exercise (SOCEX) which tests the ESGs ability in various combat and non-combat scenarios. If ESGs participate in joint exercises, as previously mentioned, they typically are TACON to a CSG or other staff and do not operate in the joint planning process as exemplified by the *Bataan* ESG's involvement during Second Fleet's JTFEX 06-2, Operation Bold Step.⁴³

At the conclusion of the training cycle and as the final certification for deployment, ESGs should participate as the JFMCC in a joint exercise focused on HA/DR. As the Department of Defense's joint force provider and trainer, Joint Forces Command should be the overall observer for this exercise. These exercises could be similar to Exercise Golden Guardian, where ESG3, the Army, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) responded to a simulated earthquake in San Francisco or JTFEX 06-2 where Amphibious Group TWO (CPG-2) served as the Coalition Force Maritime Component Commander (CFMCC)⁴⁴ and need to be a part of every

ESGs training cycle and criteria for their deployment.⁴⁵ Concerning ESG3's involvement in Exercise Golden Guardian, Admiral Balmert stated:

"This training developed essential skills, which would be necessary to meeting the demands of a crisis for our nation at home. . . . This is important, as not only are we a fighting force, but we are a ready force whose diverse skills make us uniquely qualified to respond to just about any situation that may come up. That is one of ESG's greatest strengths: its diverse capability."⁴⁶

For limited duration and scale operations, an O-6 led ESG can operate at the operational and tactical level - but I do not believe the staff is not large enough to be able to conduct operations with extended durations. But if ESGs, and specifically O-6 staffs, alone are not viewed to be capable enough to perform the required operational level planning and coordination expected as a JFMCC, the Numbered Fleet of responsibility could send a rapidly deployable team (fly-away) similar to the JTF Standing Joint Force Headquarters at Joint Forces Command designated to assist the GCC. The Fly-Away JFMCC team was also presented at the April 2006 Reserve Component (RC) Numbered Fleet Conference discussing that RC personnel trained in specific skills for JFMCCs could augment Numbered Fleets to provide the essential core JFMCC staff.⁴⁷ A similar team either from the RC or from the Numbered Fleet of operations could supplement the ESG staffs to provide an effective core for the JFMCC.

FINAL REMARKS

In 2006, the ESG performed superbly in a tense crisis situation, much as forward-deployed naval response forces have done for more than 230 years. While we find ourselves in an era of uncertainty, America's naval forces, properly resourced and infused with new, more capable platforms and operational concepts, will become an ever more critical component of the joint force in the 21st century and beyond.⁴⁸

The Navy of the future will transform to deal with more emergent situations in the areas of HA/DR, consequence management, and small crisis versus the major combat operations it has

been accustomed. With this evolving transformation, the Navy needs to prepare itself to react with the appropriate, lower level of command from within the forces utilized instead of those at a higher level of command.

The future organization of Expeditionary Strike Groups is uncertain. Will they remain at the current form where CPG1, CPG2, and CPG3 are the only ESGs, will the West Coast model with a FO/GO led ESG prevail, or will ESGs return to being commanded as in the East Coast with an O-6. In any form, the ESG will continue to provide an immeasurable asset to the Naval Component Commander and in turn the Geographic Combatant Commander and could be even more effective as a joint force enable if trained and certified as a Joint Force Maritime Component Commander.

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